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MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

DIA review completed

ACTION

Army review completed

June 12, 1970

TOP SECRET--UMBRA--NOFORN

MEMORANDUM FOR HENRY A. KISSINGER

FROM: R. C. Robinson

SUBJECT: Vietnamese Communist Intentions in Cambodia Prior
to April 28, 1970

The attached paper was prepared in response to your request for an assessment of communist intentions in Cambodia prior to the initiation of U.S. and allied operations into the sanctuaries on April 28, 1970. From an analysis of captured enemy documents, it is abundantly clear that detailed plans to foster a revolutionary movement and take control of the country were in existence well before allied cross-border operations began. Moreover, a review of communist military actions prior to April 28 demonstrates clearly that enemy forces were rapidly implementing these plans by that date.

COMUSMACV has reported that approximately 5.5 tons of enemy documents have been captured in Cambodia. These papers range in size and complexity from simple personal letters to operational plans. They reveal a consistent pattern of communist intentions and objectives as follows:

- To embark on a sweeping long-range program of subversion.
- To establish Cambodian front groups and local government administrations.
- To bolster the Khmer Rouge and foster unity between the Vietnamese communists and the Cambodians.
- To use VC/NVA military forces in accomplishing the above.

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Communist military operations prior to April 28 substantiated the fact that their campaign was designed to secure base areas and lines of communication, while simultaneously fomenting a popular uprising, supported and controlled by the VC/NVA. A compilation of all-source reporting by the end of April reveals the following pattern of enemy operations:

- Reorientation of base area defenses on March 15 -- three days prior to the ouster of Sihanouk.
- Initiation of probes to the north and west into Cambodia, accompanied by hard-line propaganda.
- Launching of four attacks against Cambodian forces by March 29, each in excess of three miles inside the Cambodian border.
- Exerting of military pressure against Neak Luong and Chipou.
- Forcing the evacuation of border posts in Parrot's Beak prior to April 10.
- By April 16, embarking on a campaign to isolate Phnom Penh and overthrow the Lon Nol government.
- At month's end, capturing the major towns of Snoul, Chhlong, and Mimot; successfully interdicting the Kompong Som-Phnom Penh railroad and all major roads linking Vietnam with Phnom Penh.
- And finally, the surfacing of their infrastructure in each region as soon as it came under effective communist control.

RECOMMENDATION:

Sign the attached memo to the President, forwarding to him an eight-page analysis which demonstrates the nature of communist intentions in Cambodia prior to April 28. (The three attachments to the basic assessment contain substantiating evidence, and have been summarized therein.)

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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

INFORMATION

TOP SECRET--UMBRA--NOFORN

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: Henry A. Kissinger

SUBJECT: Vietnamese Communist Intentions in Cambodia Prior
to April 28, 1970

The attached paper contains an assessment of communist intentions in Cambodia prior to the initiation of U.S. and allied operations on April 28. From an analysis of captured enemy documents, it is abundantly clear that detailed plans to foster a revolutionary movement and take control of the country were in existence well before allied cross-border operations began. Moreover, a review of communist military actions prior to April 28 demonstrates clearly that enemy forces were rapidly implementing these plans by that date.

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- And finally, the surfacing of their infrastructure in each region as soon as it came under effective communist control.

RECOMMENDATION:

That you read the attached eight-page assessment, reflecting the nature of communist intentions in Cambodia prior to April 28. (The three enclosures to the basic paper contain substantiating evidence, and have been summarized therein.)

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~~TOP SECRET~~ ~~IMBRIA~~ ~~NO FOREIGN DISSEM~~DIA INTELLIGENCE APPRAISALVietnamese Communist Intentions in
Cambodia Prior to 28 April 1970 (U)

1. (C) Summary - Cambodia has always occupied an important place in Vietnamese Communist goals to gain control of Southeast Asia. Historically, Cambodian territory was used in support of enemy aims in the Republic of Vietnam; in recent years, however, the Communists have taken direct action against the Cambodian Government itself. Documents captured in Cambodia make it abundantly clear that the Vietnamese Communists had detailed plans to take control of the country well before Allied operations began. Moreover, a review of Communist actions prior to 28 April shows that enemy forces were rapidly implementing these plans.

2. (S/NFD) Introduction

a. Cambodia has always occupied an important place in Vietnamese Communist goals to gain hegemony over Southeast Asia. By whatever their name -- Viet Cong, Viet Minh, or Khmer Rouge -- enemy troops and officials have been present in Cambodia since the end of World War II. They had been primarily oriented toward supporting Hanoi's military and subversive operations in the Republic of Vietnam. Since 1967, however, they have been increasingly anti-Cambodian.

b. Communist base areas along the Vietnamese-Cambodian border -- 14 at last count -- have supported the infiltration of personnel and supplies south from the Lao Panhandle to the Republic of Vietnam, contained medical facilities and supply depots, and been used as sanctuaries by elements of COSVN (the supreme Communist headquarters for enemy forces in the Republic of Vietnam) and by regimental-size units to rest, refit, and resupply. Also, with the connivance of corrupt Cambodian military and political officials and merchants, including Chief-of-State Prince Sihanouk,

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military equipment delivered to Kompong Som (Sihanoukville) by Communist ships found its way to Cambodian military depots and thence to Communist forces -- some 3,200 tons from January 1969 to January 1970. An estimated 15,000 tons of rice were delivered to enemy elements in Vietnamese border areas in 1969 by smugglers and as a result of "trade agreements" between the COSVN-subordinate National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam and the Sihanouk government. In effect, the Communists had carved out strips of territory along the Vietnamese border from the Lao-Cambodian-South Vietnamese border where they held sway and had secured the cooperation of key government personalities in receiving munitions and foodstuffs to supplement the flow through Laos.

c. Hanoi's long-range goal of controlling the whole of Indochina must have been the most-compelling reason for the emergence of the Khmer Rouge insurgency. Active insurgency began in 1967. By 1970 it had developed into a country-wide movement with an estimated armed strength of at least 3,000. Khmer Rouge troops -- many equipped with modern Communist small-arms -- were operating in company-size formations and with a sophistication that made outside command-and-control a sine qua non.

3. (TSU/NFD) Communist Intentions Toward Cambodia

a. Communist intentions toward Cambodia prior to Allied operations in Cambodia were made abundantly clear in documents (enclosure 1) captured by Allied forces in that country; all were dated before Allied operations began except one which was undated. MACV characterizes these documents as "minor" -- they are mainly directives, memoranda, notebooks, circulars, lesson plans, and letters -- but notes that in their entirety they present a clear picture of Communist aims. The few synopses of these documents received by this Agency uphold this judgment. Unless otherwise indicated, the substance of MACV's comments and assessment follows:

-- The ouster of Prince Sihanouk on 18 March caused the enemy to become very concerned about carrying out, in accordance with his timetable, his objectives in the Republic of Vietnam. In order to insure continued use of their sanctuaries, the Vietnamese Communists recognized the

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necessity of intensifying their military/political activities in order to replace Lon Nol with the more sympathetic Sihanouk, or at least to seize control of that part of Cambodia east of the Mekong and prevent the new government from bringing pressure against the sanctuaries. (DIA Comment: This MACV judgment is buttressed by a 27 March message from COSVN headquarters to subordinate elements containing a detailed policy statement on Cambodia. The COSVN message discounted the possibility of direct US intervention in Cambodia and outlined the following goals:

- (1) Maintaining a holding posture at the border;
- (2) Defending caches and leadership agencies;
- (3) Cultivating and supporting Cambodian insurgency, in part by exterminating tyrannical individuals and units; and
- (4) Forming a united "Indochina Front" to provide tight coordination among the Vietnamese, Lao, and Cambodian "revolutions." Also, the concurrent consultations between North Vietnamese Politburo member Le Duc Tho and Party First Secretary Le Duan and their Soviet and Chinese counterparts suggests that Hanoi was bringing Moscow and Peking up to date on its intentions toward the new government in Phnom Penh.)

b. The documentary evidence of Hanoi's aggressive intentions falls into three general categories.

-- The establishment of Cambodian Front groups, local government administrations, and the bolstering of the Khmer Rouge;

-- The role of VC/NVA military forces in these tasks; and

-- The fostering of friendship between the Vietnamese (Communists) and Cambodians.

c. Summaries of documents referring to the first category follow:

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-- A six-page guide (undated), believed to have been drafted by the COSVN-subordinated South Vietnam Liberation Agency (SVNLA) and captured near Snoul, contained a plan for the organization of the "National United Front of Cambodia" at hamlet and village level. It explained that the Front would replace the Lon Nol government and serve as the leading organ of those supporting Sihanouk and in the development of friendship and solidarity with the SVNLA and the "Liberation Army." Specific tasks mentioned were the overthrow of Lon Nol, improved Khmer-Vietnamese solidarity against the US, the organization of various elements of the population into associated liberation elements (e.g., youth, women, and the elderly), and strengthening the Khmer Rouge. The structure and composition of the hamlet and village committees and the pro-Communist-pro-Sihanouk qualifications of their leaders were also specified. (DIA Comment: Synopses of undated documents captured in Svey Rieng Province on 3 May and in Kompong Cham on the 2d discuss this subject in the same light as well as the formation of action teams to assist the Cambodian "friends." These additional discoveries suggest that the plan had been prepared well before Allied operations in Cambodia and had been widely disseminated.

-- A document dated 1 May captured in the Fishhook, where the Headquarters, SVNLA, was located, contained a summary of political actions by an unidentified subordinate during the period 11-30 April. Phase One (11-12 April) concerned the political reorientation of cadre and troops; Phase Two (12-30 April), the "activation" of Cambodian guerrilla forces and an infrastructure. The over-all goal was to have Khmer Rouge administrations in five of 12 villages covered by the report.

-- A 27 March directive captured near Snoul that was prepared by the SVNLA Military Affairs Party Committee outlined ways to contact Cambodian military officers to convince them to support Sihanouk. The role of the Vietnamese Communists in this regard was evident in the statement that "... It should also be pointed out ... that we are ready to provide them with every assistance, including cadre and armed forces."

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-- An NVA soldier's notebook captured near the Cambodian border in Tay Ninh Province contained an 18 April entry to the effect that he was one of those assigned to activate guerrillas and help in the formation and training of liberation organizations in Kompong Cham Province.

-- A 19 April review of enemy political activity found in Kompong Cham Province summarizes a meeting of the COSVN base area security committee. It noted the possibility of using the Mekong as a line of communication and the good progress that had been achieved thus far.

d. The prime role of VC/NVA military forces in the Cambodian "liberation" (Category Two) was spelled out in the following documents:

-- A very detailed notebook compiled by the Signal Office, Military Staff Department, Headquarters, SVNLA, found in the Mimot area contained an 18 April entry stating that VC/NVA cadre would head local force companies composed of Cambodian combatants. Also, signal battalions would be organized for the use of the "revolutionary movement" in all provinces and military regions. A reference to an unspecified directive noted that the immediate VC/NVA task in 1970 was to support the Khmer Rouge, consolidate base areas, and complete preparations for combat against Cambodian troops. (DIA Comment: Correlation of the foregoing MACV reference with a recently received synopsis indicates that 30 signal battalions were to be activated and that every district would have one local force company; at least one provincial unit would be directly subordinate to the SVNLA. A 26 April entry reported the activation of a 135-man local force company in an unspecified district, including 12 cadre drawn from Doan 75, possibly the SVNLA Artillery Headquarters.

-- Two other notebooks captured in Kratie Province spell out the mission of the 141st NVA Regiment in Cambodia, i.e., destroy loyal government forces, hold occupied areas until they are transferred to the Khmer Rouge, and coordinate attacks with the formation of the infrastructure. NVA troops were said to be helping the Khmer people develop a socialist (Communist) country and while doing so create advantageous conditions for the liberation of the Republic of Vietnam.

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e. Documents relating to the fostering of friendship between the Vietnamese Communists and Cambodians (Category Three) mainly refer to a Headquarters, SVNLA, 10-point code of conduct governing the behavior of NVA soldiers toward the Cambodian population. Found in several documents, the code specifies the correct attitude toward monks, religious institutions, and women. The necessity of paying for all damage and compensating for all food was also mentioned. One document captured in the Mimot area cautioned against revealing the presence of the SVNLA in Cambodia; documents were not to be carried, and the use of Vietnamese was prohibited in the presence of prisoners.

f. The foregoing clear evidence of aggressive VC/NVA intentions toward the Phnom Penh government lends credence to Cambodian claims of the seizure of incriminating documents in the Viet Cong Provisional Revolutionary Government and North Vietnamese embassies in Phnom Penh in mid-March. A reliable clandestine source has reported that documents taken from the North Vietnamese Embassy during the 11 March anti-Communist demonstrations in Phnom Penh, revealed the existence of a plan for the annexation of Cambodia to Vietnam. The three important points were:

-- The necessity for propaganda to show that the Sihanouk government (Sihanouk not ousted until 18 March) was even then under American control;

-- Surveillance and reporting on the Cambodian army; and

-- Cambodian "neutrality" worked in Communist favor "for the moment."

-- Another reliable clandestine source has reported documents found in the ruins of the PRG Embassy indicated a coup attempt was planned for 29 March to "eliminate rightists in the Lon Nol government." According to Matak, Sihanouk himself was a target for liquidation.

4. (S/NFD) Other Documentary Evidence

a. The foregoing assessment of documents does not, of course, include the vital importance the Communists place on Cambodia to support their war effort in the Republic of

Vietnam. The screening process of the more than five tons of documents captured so far has provided additional proof of the Communist reliance on that country as a logistics and infiltration corridor, and for sanctuaries for units and command-and-control elements. It is little wonder then why the Vietnamese Communists felt compelled to take such direct action against the new government in Phnom Penh.

b. That the Vietnamese Communists had formulated and embarked upon a bold course in Cambodia before Allied operations began in late April is borne out by a review of events in that country over the preceding six months or so.

-- As early as December 1969, three of Sihanouk's key supporters resigned from the government in an effort to end its anti-Sihanouk orientation.

-- In January 1970, Sihanouk left Cambodia for his annual sojourn in France. Even the Prince was willing to concede at that time that the VC/NVA presence in his country had jeopardized its independence.

-- In mid-March, the government whipped up anti-Communist demonstrations in various parts of the country, including the sacking of the PRG and North Vietnamese embassies, and demanded that the VC/NVA remove their forces from Cambodia by dawn on the 15th. By the 18th, negotiations for the latter had broken down and Sihanouk had been ousted.

-- In the wake of the ultimatum to remove their forces, the VC/NVA began digging in and consolidating their positions in the border areas and let it known that they had no intention of leaving; Hanoi and the PRG suspended relations with Phnom Penh on 27 March.

5. (TSU/NFD) VC/NVA Military Actions

a. A compilation of all-source reporting by the end of April (enclosure 3) indicated that the VC/NVA or their Cambodian Communist allies had launched numerous ground attacks and attacks by fire on the Mekong River traffic. Communist forces in excess of 100 troops were regularly reported to be operating against Cambodian elements.

b. By 10 April, the Cambodians had been forced to evacuate border posts in the Parrot's Beak; by the 16th, it

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was apparent that the Communists were not only securing and protecting their base areas but had embarked on a campaign to isolate Phnom Penh and overthrow the Lon Nol government. At month's end, the Communists had captured major population centers in the northeast as part of their campaign to gain control of the Mekong. They were also well on their way to cutting off the capital from the rest of the country, especially to the south toward the Vietnam border and southwest toward the major seaport of Kompong Som. The infrastructure surfaced in these regions almost as soon as they came under effective Communist control.

c. Hanoi's guiding hand was evident in such developments as Le Duan's 21 April speech in Moscow on the need for united Communist action in Indochina and Politburo member Truong Chinh's announcement from Hanoi on the same day that a united Indochina Front had been formed. Within the week, Sihanouk had announced the formation of his government in exile.

6. (C) Conclusions

a. Hanoi's determination to control all of Indochina has made Cambodia a prime target of the Vietnamese Communists.

b. Well before their fall-out with the Phnom Penh government, the Communists had embarked on a sweeping long-range subversive program against it, including dealing with corrupt officials and the sponsorship of insurgency.

c. Captured documents show that with Sihanouk's ouster on 18 March, the Vietnamese Communists felt compelled to abandon their heretofore largely sub rosa campaign in favor of direct action.

d. Communist military successes prior to 28 April made it clear that this campaign was designed to secure base areas and lines of communication while simultaneously setting the stage for the return of Sihanouk under the guise of a popular uprising that was nevertheless controlled by the VC/NVA.

3 Enclosures

1. MACV Msg MAC 7583,
DTG 041130Z Jun (C/EO)
2. DIA Appraisal - Significance
of Enemy Documents Captured
in Cambodia (S/NFD)
3. DIA Appraisal - VC Offensive
Activity Directed Against
Cambodia, 18 Mar-28 Apr 70 (TSCW)

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DIA APPRAISAL

VIET CONG OFFENSIVE ACTIVITY DIRECTED AGAINST CAMBODIA

18 MARCH - 28 APRIL 1970

1. (U) Background

-- This appraisal contains a compendium of significant VC/NVA aggressive actions in Cambodia from the fall of Prince Sihanouk on 18 March to the initiation of Allied operations in that country on 28 April.

2. (TSU) Discussion

-- Following the 18 March ouster of Prince Sihanouk, the Vietnamese Communists redirected their strategic plans in relation to Cambodia.

-- Three days previously, on the 15th, they had reoriented their base area defenses against Cambodia, in response to Prime Minister Lon Nol's 12 March ultimatum to leave Cambodian territory. Probes north and west into Cambodia and issuance of hard-line propaganda to the effect that they were not going to leave, further indicated that the Viet Cong/ North Vietnamese were intent on consolidating and protecting their base areas.

-- Meanwhile, on 23 March, Sihanouk broadcast from Peking that he was forming a Government of National Union. Negotiations concerning the continued use of Cambodia by the VC/NVA broke down, culminating in the suspension of diplomatic relations by the Communists on 27 March. Concurrently, short-lived Communist-inspired pro-Sihanouk demonstrations that erupted in eastern Cambodia were promptly quashed by Cambodian troops. By the 29th, Communist forces had launched four attacks against Cambodian forces, each in excess of three miles inside the Cambodian border. Immediate objectives appeared to be the towns of Neak Luong and Chipou.

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-- Increasing military pressure by the Communists forced the Cambodians to evacuate border posts in Svay Rieng Province by 10 April. By the 16th, it had become apparent that the Communists were executing a plan that went beyond securing and extending their base areas. In addition to striking into Cambodia's interior, the Communists conducted political meetings among the populace, provided arms for those willing to accept them, and liquidated some who were unsympathetic to the Communist cause.

-- By the end of April, the Communists had captured the major towns of Snoul, Chhlong, and Mimot; successfully interdicted the Kompong Som - Phnom Penh railroad and all major roads linking Vietnam with Phnom Penh.

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